



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

No. 2016-02

OCTOBER 8, 2015

CONSULTANT SERVICES

[Independent Contractors]

**Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
1281 Highway 51 North
Madison, Mississippi 39110**

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Section 1 –Background

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (hereinafter “MDRS,” “Agency” or “State”) is a state agency that provides resources to help Mississippians with disabilities find new careers, live more independently, overcome obstacles, and face new challenges. It is the mission of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), to provide appropriate and comprehensive services to Mississippians with disabilities in a timely and effective manner. Programs and services assist individuals with disabilities to gain employment, retain employment and to live more independently.

Disability Determination Services (DDS) is an agency in the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) which operates in a partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to make disability decisions on Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability claims. This office handles claims from all 23 SSA offices in Mississippi. More information about DDS can be found on the MDRS website at <http://www.mdrs.ms.gov/Disability/Pages/default.aspx>.

Section 2 – Purpose

MDRS is soliciting applications from experienced professional physicians and psychologists for the purpose of establishing a list of qualified consulting medical and psychological specialists for its Office of Disability Determination Services. The Consulting Specialists will carry out the prescribed procedures relating to a part of the documentation requirements necessary in completing disability determinations on applications for Social Security Disability Benefits.

Section 3 – Timeline

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| • Request for Qualifications (RFQ) Issue Date: | October 8, 2015 |
| • Deadline for Vendor Questions to MDRS: | October 20, 5:00 PM CST |
| • Anticipated Posting of Written Answers to Questions: | October 22, 2015, 5:00 PM CST |
| • Application Submission Deadline: | October 28, 2015, 5:00 PM CST |
| • Selection Completed: | Prior to November 30, 2015 |

Section 4 – Minimum Qualifications

A Medical Consultant (MC) or Psychological Consultant (PC) is a member of the DDS or SSA team that makes disability determinations. The MC and PC provide expertise in evaluating medical issues.

- An MC must be an acceptable medical source identified in the first or third through fifth options below. MCs who are not physicians are limited to evaluating the impairments for which they are qualified. The MC must meet any appropriate qualifications for his or her specialty. Acceptable medical sources are:
 - Licensed physicians (medical or osteopathic doctors);
 - Licensed or certified psychologists. Included are school psychologists, or other licensed or certified individuals with other titles who perform the same function as a school psychologist in a school setting, for purposes of establishing intellectual disability, learning disabilities, and

- borderline intellectual functioning only (see DI 22505.003C on licensed or certified individuals who perform the same function as school psychologists);
 - Licensed optometrists, for purposes of establishing visual disorders (except, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, licensed optometrists, for the measurement of visual acuity and visual fields only);
 - Licensed podiatrists, for purposes of establishing impairments of the foot, or foot and ankle, depending on whether the State in which the podiatrist practices permits the practice of podiatry on the foot only, or the foot and ankle; and
 - Qualified speech-language pathologists (SLPs), for purposes of establishing speech or language impairments only. For this source, “qualified” means that the SLP must be licensed by the State professional licensing agency, or be fully certified by the State education agency in the State in which he or she practices, or hold a Certificate of Clinical Competence from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.
- The PC is a psychologist with the same responsibilities as an MC but the PC only evaluates mental impairments in cases where there is evidence of a mental impairment. The PC must be a qualified psychologist. For disability program purposes, a psychologist is qualified if he or she:
 - is licensed or certified as a psychologist at the independent practice level of psychology by the State in which he or she practices;
 - possesses a doctorate degree in psychology from a program in clinical psychology of an educational institution accredited by an organization recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, formerly the Council on Post-Secondary Accreditation; or
 - is in a national register of health service providers in psychology which the Commissioner of Social Security deems appropriate;
 - possesses two years of supervised clinical experience as a psychologist, at least one year of which is post masters degree; and
 - Qualified speech-language pathologists (SLPs), for purposes of establishing speech or language impairments only. For this source, “qualified” means that the SLP must be licensed by the State professional licensing agency, or be fully certified by the State education agency in the State in which he or she practices, or hold a Certificate of Clinical Competence from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Section 5 –Services Provided by Consultants

In carrying out the responsibilities of a consulting specialist, the Consultant will provide services including, but not limited to:

- Determination of the severity of impairments by reviewing and evaluating medical evidence obtained in conjunction with applications for disability benefits under provisions of the Social Security Act. This includes written evaluations and completion of specified forms as required by Social Security regulations.
- Review of case records and provide written evaluation of the adequacy of documentation and make recommendations for further development.
- Review of and signed execution of completed determinations.

- Review and analyzation of returned cases from the Social Security Administration (SSA) and preparation of rebuttals on medical issues.
- Maintenance of an accuracy rate of 95% or higher.
- Attendance at, preparation or presentation of, without compensation, up to two (2) hours per month of required training in program and administrative policy. May also participate in other activities (excluding case ratings or determination signing) as requested by MDRS Administration including but not limited to preparation/presentation of training, discussion of program and/or administrative issues, etc.

Consultants are independent contractors and are not employees of MDRS or the State of Mississippi.

Section 6 – Application Submission Requirements

The application package must be sealed and must contain the following:

- Application Cover Sheet (**Attachment A**).
- Resume or vitae indicating the individual's education and work experience;
- The applicable certification(s) and/or license(s) from the applicable certifying authority;
- Application Form (**Attachment B**) – At the top of the form, the vendor should indicate the category of consulting for which he or she qualifies and is applying (may apply/qualify for more than one category). The Consulting Specialist Services Contract Rate Schedule **MUST** be accepted as indicated by the vendor's signature. Failure to complete and/or sign the application form may result in the individual being determined nonresponsive.

Additional submission requirements include:

- The original and one copy of the application package must be signed and submitted in a sealed envelope or package to 1281 Highway 51 North, Madison, Mississippi 39110 no later than **5:00 PM CST, Wednesday, October 28, 2015**. The original application must be marked "ORIGINAL". All documents contained in the original application package must have original signatures and must be signed by a person who is authorized to bind the vendor. All additional application sets may contain photocopies of the original package. Sealed applications should be labeled as follows:

Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
Attention: Rebecca E. Henley, Staff Attorney
1281 Highway 51 North
Madison, Mississippi 39110
Request for Qualifications for Consultant Services
RFQ No. 2016-02
Consultant Category: _____
Opening Date: 5:15 PM CST, October 28, 2015
SEALED APPLICATION PACKAGE – DO NOT OPEN

*** List either “medical” or “psychological” as the consultant category.*

- Timely submission of the application package is the responsibility of the vendor. Applications received after the specified time will be rejected and returned to the vendor unopened. The time and date of receipt by MDRS will be indicated on the envelope or package by MDRS staff.
- Each page of the application form and all attachments must be identified with the name of the vendor.
- MDRS reserves the right to decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether to reject an application with modifications or additions as nonresponsive.
- **Any vendor claiming that his or her application contains information exempt from the Mississippi Public Records Act (*Miss. Code Ann. §§ 25-61-1 et. seq.*), shall segregate and mark the information as confidential and provide the specific statutory authority for the exemption.**
- All application packages must be received by MDRS no later than **5:00 PM CST, Wednesday, October 28, 2015**. Applications submitted via facsimile (faxes) or email **will not** be accepted. It is suggested that if an application is mailed to MDRS, it should be posted in certified mail with a return receipt requested. MDRS will not be responsible for mail delays or lost mail.

Section 7 – Basis for Selection

All application packages received in response to this RFQ by the stated deadline will receive a comprehensive, fair, and impartial review. A review committee will consider the applications in the following three-phase process:

Phase 1: During this phase of the review process, all applications received will be reviewed to determine if the following mandatory requirements of this RFQ have been satisfied:

- Application submission deadline met
- Required format followed
- Required number of copies along with the original application provided
- Signed Application Cover Sheet provided
- Responsiveness to the questions contained on the Application Cover Sheet
- Resume or Curriculum Vitae provided
- Signed Application Form provided
- Acceptance of all Standard Terms and Conditions
- Signed Acknowledgement of RFQ Amendments (if amendments have been posted) provided

Failure to comply with any of the above may result in elimination from further consideration. Vendors that are determined to have complied will continue to the next phase, while vendors that do not comply will be notified of their non-responsive status.

Phase 2: During this phase of the review process, all remaining applications will be reviewed to determine responsibility; *i.e.*, whether the minimum vendor requirements of this RFQ have been met.

Vendors that are determined by the review committee to have shown the minimum qualifications outlined in Section 4 will be found to be responsible. These vendors will continue to the next phase, while vendors that are not determined to be responsible will be notified of such determination.

Phase 3: During this phase of the review process, all remaining vendors will be evaluated through either an interview or a performance evaluation. Performance evaluations shall only be allowed when an applicant has previously performed medical or psychological consulting services of this type for the Office of Disability Determination Services in MDRS.

Each vendor to reach Phase 3 will be scored using the Evaluation Score Sheet (**Attachment C**). The vendors will be placed on the Qualified Consultant List ranked in order of their scores. MDRS may contract with these vendors to provide consulting services for MDRS; **however, selection for the list does not guarantee that a contract will be entered into with that vendor. Contracts will be awarded based upon the need and demand for the consultant services to be provided.**

Section 8 – MDRS Contact and Questions/Requests for Clarification

- All questions and requests for clarification must be directed by email to:

Rebecca Henley, Staff Attorney
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
Email: rehenley@mdrs.ms.gov

- Questions and requests for clarification must be submitted via email by the deadline reflected in Section 3.
- All questions and answers will be published on the MDRS website (<http://www.mdrs.ms.gov>) in a manner that all vendors will be able to view by the date and time reflected in Section 3.
- MDRS will not be bound by any verbal or written information that is not contained within this RFQ unless formally noticed and issued by the contact person.
- Should an amendment to the RFQ be issued, it will be posted on the MDRS website (<http://www.mdrs.ms.gov>) in a manner that all vendors will be able to view. Furthermore, vendors must acknowledge receipt of any amendment to the solicitation by signing and returning the amendment with the application package, by identifying the amendment number and date in the space provided for this purpose on the application form, or by letter. The acknowledgment must be received by the MDRS by the time and at the place specified for receipt of applications. It is the vendor's sole responsibility to monitor the website for amendments to the RFQ.

Section 9 – Duration

The anticipated term of any contract with a vendor selected for the Qualified Consultant List is tentatively November 18, 2015 until June 30, 2016, with one (1) optional one-year renewal. Renewals will be determined annually and will be contingent upon successful completion of services under the preceding year's contract, a performance-based evaluation, and MDRS's need for continuation of the services.

Section 10 – Removal from Qualified Consultant List

Vendors added to the Qualified Consultant List may be removed from the list for cause by MDRS.

Section 11 – Vendor Certification

The vendor agrees that submission of a signed application form is certification that the vendor will accept a contract award made to it as a result of the submission.

Section 12 – Debarment

By submitting an application, the vendor certifies that it is not currently debarred from contracting with any political subdivision or agency of the State of Mississippi and that it is not an agent of a person or entity that is currently so debarred.

Section 13 – Registration with Mississippi Secretary of State

By submitting an application, the vendor certifies that it is registered to do business with the Mississippi Secretary of State or, if not already registered, that it will do so prior to entering into a contract with MDRS.

Section 14 – Selection Notification

All vendors who progressed to Phase 2 will be notified of the vendors selected for the Qualified Consultant List via letter.

Section 15 – Procurement Methodology

- **Restrictions on Communication with MDRS Staff**

At no time shall any vendor or its personnel contact, or attempt to contact, any member of MDRS staff regarding this RFQ except the contact person as set forth in Section 8.

- **Cost of Preparing Application**

MDRS accepts no responsibility for any expense incurred by any vendor in the preparation and presentation of an application. Such expenses, including any travel costs, shall be borne exclusively by the vendor.

- **Rejection of Application**

An application that includes terms and conditions that do not conform to the terms and conditions in this RFQ, including attachments, is subject to rejection as non-responsive. Further, submission of an application form that is not complete and/or signed is subject to rejection as non-responsive. MDRS reserves the right to permit the vendor to withdraw nonconforming terms and conditions from its application prior to a determination by MDRS of non-responsiveness.

- **Debriefing**

A vendor, successful or unsuccessful, may request a post-award debriefing, in writing, by U.S. mail or electronic submission. The written request must be received by MDRS within three (3) business days of notification of the selection of the qualified consultants list. A post-award debriefing is a meeting and not a hearing; therefore, legal representation is not required. A debriefing typically occurs within five (5) business days of receipt of the request. If a vendor prefers to have legal representation present,

the vendor must notify MDRS in writing and identify its attorney by name, address and telephone number. MDRS will schedule and/or suspend and reschedule the meeting at a time when a representative of the Office of the Mississippi Attorney General can be present. For additional information regarding Post-Award Debriefing, as well as the information that may be provided and excluded, please see Section 7-112 through 7-112.07, Post-Award Vendor Debriefing, of the *Mississippi Personal Service Contract Review Board's Rules and Regulations*.

- **Protests**

Any actual or prospective vendor who is aggrieved in connection with this solicitation or the outcome of this RFQ may file a protest with the Executive Director of the Mississippi State Personnel Board. The protest shall be submitted in writing by the following deadlines, whichever deadline runs first:

- within seven working days after such aggrieved person or entity knows or should have known of the facts giving rise thereto;
- within seven working days after the date of a letter from MDRS notifying the vendor that the vendor did not move forward in the selection process; or,
- within seven working days after the date of a letter from MDRS notifying the vendor of the vendors that were selected for the Qualified Consultant List.

All protests must be in writing, dated, signed by the vendor, and contain a statement of the reasons(s) for protest, citing the law(s), rule(s), regulations(s), or procedure(s) on which the protest is based. The written protest letter shall contain an explanation of the specific basis for the protest. The protesting vendor must provide facts and evidence to support the protest. A protest is considered filed when received by MDRS via either U.S. Mail, postage prepaid, or by personal delivery. Protests filed after the deadline for same will not be considered.

Section 16 – Required Contract Terms and Conditions

Any contract entered into with MDRS pursuant to a vendor being placed on the Qualified Consultant List will have the required clauses found in Appendix D, page 142 of the *Mississippi Personal Service Contract Review Board's Rules and Regulations* which may be found online at:

<http://www.mspb.ms.gov/media/34412/pscrb%20rules%20and%20regulations%20effective%201.16.2015.pdf>.

Section 17 – Additional Contract Terms and Conditions

Any contract entered into with MDRS pursuant to a vendor being placed on the Qualified Consultant List shall have the terms and conditions as shown in the Consultant Contract Template for Contractual Workers which may be found online at: <http://www.mdrs.ms.gov>.

Section 18 – Attachments

The attachments to this RFQ are made a part of this RFQ as if copied herein in words and figures.

Section 19 – Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services Website

This RFQ, and questions and answers concerning this RFQ, will be posted on the MDRS website at <http://www.mdrs.ms.gov>.

Section 20 – Equal Opportunity Statement

MDRS will select vendors pursuant to this RFQ without regard to political affiliation, race, color, handicap, genetic information, religion, national origin, sex, religious creed, age, or disability.

**ATTACHMENT A
APPLICATION COVER SHEET**

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (hereinafter “MDRS,” “Agency” or “State”) is soliciting applications from experienced professional physicians and psychologists for the purpose of establishing a list of qualified consulting medical and psychological specialists for its Office of Disability Determination Services. The Consulting Specialists will carry out the prescribed procedures relating to a part of the documentation requirements necessary in completing disability determinations on applications for Social Security Disability Benefits.

Applications are to be submitted as listed below, on or before 5:00 PM CST, Wednesday, October 28, 2015.

PLEASE MARK YOUR ENVELOPE:

**Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
Attention: Rebecca E. Henley, Staff Attorney
1281 Highway 51 North
Madison, Mississippi 39110
Request for Qualifications for Consultant Services
RFQ No. 2016-02
Consultant Category: _____ **
Opening Date: 5:15 PM CST, October 28, 2015
SEALED APPLICATION PACKAGE – DO NOT OPEN**

*** List either “medical” or “psychological” as the consultant category.*

Name of Vendor: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

VENDOR NAME: _____

In addition to providing the above contact information, please answer the following questions regarding your qualifications and experience:

List all degrees and specialized education you have received that are applicable to performing the services required in this RFQ. Please provide the name of the school as well as the date of graduation.

List all licenses, permits and/or certifications you possess that are applicable to performing the services required in this RFQ.

How many years have you been performing the services called for in this RFQ?

Do you have any prior experience evaluating Social Security disability eligibility claims? If yes, list your previous employers and state how many years you provided these services.

Services are typically provided at the MDRS facility located in Madison, Mississippi. What is your availability to travel to this facility on a regular basis? If this is not a viable option, please detail your availability and the distance that you are willing to travel in order to provide these services.

ATTACHMENT B
APPLICATION FORM FOR CONSULTANT SERVICES

Service Categories. Vendor must mark each category for which he or she wishes to be considered.

- ☐ Medical Consultation
☐ Psychological Consultation

| VENDOR NAME | TELEPHONE NUMBER |
|-------------|------------------|
| | |

| CONSULTANT SERVICES CONTRACT RATE SCHEDULE | |
|--|--|
| Case Rating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirty Dollars (\$30.00) per non-CDR case • Fifty Two Dollars (\$52.00) per CDR case |
| Determination Signing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Dollars and Seventy Five Cents (\$3.75) per endline case review/signature |
| Rebuttal Preparation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fifty Eight Dollars (\$58.00) per case |
| Rating Correction | MDRS will make no payment to the Contractual Worker for correction or completion of errors or omissions found in the quality assurance review process or by other administrative review. |
| Other Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fifty Eight Dollars (\$58.00) per hour. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other activities include training beyond two hours per month, preparing and presenting training, and any other administratively requested or required activity other than case rating or determination signing. ▪ In special situations and with prior approval by MDRS, MDRS will reimburse costs, at state rates, of travel expenses incurred by the Consultant when performing “other activities”, including Fifty Eight Dollars (\$58.00) per hour for travel time. Total time spent performing “other activities”, including travel time, shall not exceed eight (8) hours per day. |

By signing below, the vendor/company representative certifies that he/she has authority to bind the vendor/company, and further acknowledges and certifies on behalf of the vendor/company:

1. That he/she has thoroughly read and understands the Request for Qualifications and Attachments thereto;
2. That the vendor/company meets all requirements and acknowledges all certifications contained in the Request for Qualifications and Attachments thereto;
3. That the vendor/company agrees to all provisions of the Request for Qualifications and Attachments thereto including, but not limited to, the Required and Additional Clauses referenced in Sections 16 and 17 to be included in any contract resulting from this RFQ;

VENDOR NAME: _____

4. That the vendor/company agrees to and will perform the services required at the prices indicated in the contract rate schedule, including travel costs;

5. That the vendor/company can and will meet all required laws, regulations, and/or procedures related to confidentiality and represents that its workers are licensed, certified, and possess the requisite credentials to perform consultant services; and,

6. **NON-DEBARMENT** – By submitting an application, the vendor certifies that it is not currently debarred from contracting with any political subdivision or agency of the State of Mississippi and that it is not an agent of a person or entity that is currently debarred from contracting with any political subdivision or agency of the State of Mississippi.

7. **VENDOR’S REPRESENTATION REGARDING CONTINGENT FEES** – The vendor represents as a part of such vendor’s application that such vendor has/has not (***please circle applicable word or words***) retained any person or agency on a percentage, commission, or other contingent arrangement to secure placement on the Qualified Consultant List.

8. **REPRESENTATION REGARDING CONTINGENT FEES** – The vendor represents that it has not retained a person to solicit or secure placement on the Qualified Consultant List upon an agreement or understanding for a commission, percentage, brokerage, or other contingent fee, except as disclosed in the vendor’s application.

9. **REPRESENTATION REGARDING GRATUITIES** – The vendor represents that it has not violated, is not violating, and promises that it will not violate the prohibition against gratuities set forth in Section 6-204 (Gratuities) of the *Mississippi Personal Service Contract Review Board Rules and Regulations*.

10. The vendor acknowledges all amendments to the RFQ, if any [provide amendment number(s) and date(s)]:

Vendor Name [Printed]: _____

Vendor Signature: _____

Date: _____

Note: Please be sure to circle the applicable word or words for number 7 (Vendor’s Representation Regarding Contingent Fees). Failure to circle the applicable word or words and/or to sign the application form may result in the application being rejected as non-responsive. Modifications or additions to any portion of this application document may be cause for rejection of the application.

ATTACHMENT C
EVALUATION SCORE SHEET
TO BE COMPLETED BY MDRS STAFF ONLY

CONSULTANT CATEGORY: _____

VENDOR NAME: _____

| CRITERIA | POSSIBLE POINTS | SCORE | WEIGHT | WEIGHTED SCORE |
|--|----------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Interview or Performance Evaluation | 10 | | 25% | |
| Work History and Experience | 5 | | 25% | |
| Prior SSA Disability Determination Experience | 5 | | 50% | |

VENDOR TOTAL SCORE: _____